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Central Intelligence Agency

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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Afghanistan: Status and Prospects of the Insurgency

Three and a half years after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the resistance has become an effective force that controls much of the country, [redacted] Barring a drastic change in Soviet policy, we judge the fighting will continue over the next few years because existing Soviet forces will be unable to destroy the resistance. Despite improvements in weapons and training, however, we believe the insurgents will lack the firepower and organization to defeat major Soviet units. [redacted]

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The Soviets are becoming more concerned about their difficulties in coping with the resistance, [redacted]

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Soviet costs in the war have been considerable, according to our estimates [redacted]

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-- We estimate that over 16,000 Soviets have been killed or wounded in Afghanistan. The Afghan Army has suffered 50,000 casualties and nearly 80,000 men have deserted.

This memorandum was prepared by the South Asia Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis, [redacted] Information as of September 12, 1983 was used in preparation of this paper. Comments and queries are welcome and should be addressed to Chief, South Asia Division, [redacted]

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- The insurgents have shot down or destroyed in attacks on airfields some 350 Soviet and Afghan aircraft (mostly helicopters) and nearly 150 more have been lost in accidents.
- Approximately 10,000 Soviet and Afghan armored vehicles and trucks have been destroyed or damaged.
- Direct Soviet costs in Afghanistan probably total around 12 billion dollars since the invasion. [REDACTED]

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Nevertheless, we judge the Soviets still find the costs bearable and apparently believe that their relations with many countries are recovering from the damage done by the invasion and that in the long run they will overcome the resistance. We believe there is no immediate prospect that the Soviets will decide to reduce their military effort in Afghanistan. [REDACTED]

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We judge that the resistance fighters will become more politically sophisticated and militarily effective in the next two years, but they will remain vulnerable.

- The most serious threat to the resistance is civilian war-weariness and the loss of popular support over the long term that would directly affect the will to continue fighting.
- Cooperation among insurgent bands has grown, but because of deep ideological, political, and religious differences, we do not foresee a united resistance movement emerging in the next few years.
- The Soviets and the Kabul regime are likely, in our view, to continue and probably increase a wide variety of covert and overt activities--such as arranging truces, encouraging defections, and subverting groups--to exploit insurgent weaknesses inside and outside of Afghanistan.

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There are some Soviet options--massive troop reinforcement or a widespread scorched earth policy against civilians--that might drastically reduce the insurgency in the next two years.

- Moscow would, however, be reluctant to assume the high economic, political, and military costs associated with these options, in our judgment. [REDACTED]

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The Soviets have started a number of economic, educational, social, and political programs in Afghanistan that they believe will eventually turn the country into a viable Soviet-dominated communist state, [REDACTED] Because of widespread insurgent activity and opposition from the Afghan people, however, these programs have been implemented in only a few areas. [REDACTED]

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